

Austin/Travis County

Homeless Response System

EQUITY REVIEW TOOL

Equity demands we acknowledge and address the unique impacts of homelessness on historically marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, BIPOC communities, immigrants, refugees, individuals with disabilities, seniors, youth, individuals from low-income backgrounds, individuals facing language barriers, and individuals with intersecting identities. These groups face systemic barriers, discrimination, and inequities that intensify the challenges of homelessness. (For a comprehensive list of groups we are centering, as well as relevant terms, please refer to the accompanying [Equity Review Tool Glossary of Terms](#)).

By committing to ongoing research, inclusive practices, and elevating the voices of individuals directly affected, we can develop solutions that honor dignity, protect individuals' rights, and advance meaningful, transformative change.

The Equity Review Tool is designed to inform individuals of potential unintended consequences in the creation, implementation, measurement, and reporting of proposed policies, while encouraging proactive steps to address these inequities. The Equity Review Tool is a vital resource per the Leadership Council, which serves as the primary decision-making body for the Austin-Travis County Continuum of Care within the Homeless Response System. All groups are required to complete and include this tool as a foundational step when submitting proposals for consideration.

Instructions:

1. **Review the Equity Tool & Rubric** – Understand the purpose, key indicators, and assessment criteria before drafting your policy.
2. **Integrate Equity Considerations** – Reassess your policy at each stage, applying the rubric’s criteria to guide refinement.
3. **Complete the Equity Review Form** – Address each question in detail, using data and examples where applicable. *The “Examples” page provided shows many hypothetical examples that are not based on a specific policy, but are intended to illustrate ways in which the reviewer might respond.*
4. **Score the Policy Using the Rubric** – Evaluate equity integration using the rubric’s scoring scale across all categories:
 - **0:** No evidence of equity considerations.
 - **1:** Very minimal evidence and investigation into equity considerations.
 - **2:** Inconsistent equity considerations.
 - **3:** Moderate equity integration with notable gaps.
 - **4:** Clear and intentional equity considerations; some minor concerns about implementation.
 - **5:** Exceptional commitment to equity; represents best practice.
5. **Submit the Completed Form & Score** – Include this document alongside your policy for review and approval.

Equity Review Form

Policy Information

- **Policy Title:** _____
- **Date Completed:** _____
- **Committee Name:** _____

Equity Assessment Questions *(please answer questions on a separate sheet)*

Please review the Scoring Guidelines/Rubric on page 5 before answering questions.

1. List the priority populations this policy intends to serve.

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

2. How have these populations been included in policy creation and review?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

3. How does the policy demonstrate cultural awareness and ensure accessibility?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

4. List marginalized groups that could be affected *(Please reference the accompanying [Glossary](#) for populations that have been historically marginalized.)*

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

5. List the potential impacts marginalized groups may face.

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

6. How does this policy mitigate potential unintended consequences for marginalized groups?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

7. What additional strategies have been considered to achieve greater equity and inclusion in this policy?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

8. What data has been used to assess the policy's impact on equity?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

9. What data needs to be collected to monitor the policy's equity impact? How will it be collected?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

10. Please describe the framework the policy uses for continuous assessment, community engagement, and iterative improvements.

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

11. Explain how you have ensured that decision-making processes are transparent and what mechanisms for accountability and community oversight have been employed.

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

12. How does the policy address systemic barriers and promote success for the populations of focus?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

13. What alternatives to this policy could achieve similar goals?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

14. What key factors should be taken into account for future changes or revisions to this policy?

Score (0-5): _____

Notes for Improvement: _____

15. List any obstacles or restrictions that impacted your work on this policy. (*unscored*)

Scoring Guidelines/Rubric

0: No evidence of equity considerations.

1: Very minimal evidence and investigation into equity considerations.

2: Inconsistent equity considerations.

3: Moderate equity integration with notable gaps.

4: Clear and intentional equity considerations; some concerns about implementation.

5: Exceptional commitment to equity; represents best practice.

Total Score & Evaluation

Please add up all of the scores from each question (14 scored questions in total) to obtain your "Total Score"

- **Total Score (max 70 points):** _____

Next Steps for Groups Based on Total Score

- **For scores below 20:** Reconsider approach; identify priority areas for improvement alongside people with relevant lived experience and expertise.
- **For scores between 21-40:** Strengthen equity considerations through deeper community engagement and other means.
- **For scores between 41-60:** Create process improvement mechanisms, including seeking data-driven refinement.
- **For scores between 61-70:** Document and share best practices to support system-wide equity advancement.

Conclusion

Thank you for your commitment to this Equity Review Tool. It helps create and check policies to make sure that equity is embedded in policy design, implementation, and accountability. By utilizing this tool, the Homeless Response System can assess and enhance their commitment to equity while fostering positive and sustainable change within their communities.

Example Answers to the Equity Assessment Questions *(These examples are not all encompassing but designed to imagine the breadth of policies for which the Tool will be used.)*

1. List the priority populations this policy intends to serve.
 - a. *All individuals experiencing homelessness who are eligible for Rapid Rehousing (RRH).*
2. How have these populations been included in policy creation and review?
 - a. *Because this policy disproportionately impacts Black people experiencing homelessness, the committee developing the policy comprises a majority of Black members who currently receive programmatic assistance or were previously enrolled and exited early.*
3. How does the policy demonstrate cultural awareness and ensure accessibility?
 - a. *Available in multiple languages, including Spanish and braille; includes disability accommodations.*
4. List marginalized groups that could be affected. *(Please reference the accompanying [Glossary](#) for populations that have been historically marginalized.)*
 - a. *Individuals with arrest records.*
 - b. *People who use drugs.*
 - c. *People with disabilities and medically fragile individuals.*
5. List the potential impacts marginalized groups may face.
 - a. *Individuals with arrest records face significant barriers to accessing this program due to background checks and the stigma associated with incarceration.*
 - b. *People who use drugs are impacted due to sobriety/abstinence requirements.*
 - c. *People with disabilities and medically fragile individuals face employment requirements that often make them ineligible.*
6. How does this policy mitigate potential unintended consequences for marginalized groups?
 - a. *This policy will remove background check requirements for enrollment in this program.*
 - b. *This policy will remove sobriety/treatment requirements for enrollment in this program.*
 - c. *The policy will also eliminate employment barriers for people with disabilities and medically fragile individuals.*

7. What additional strategies have been considered to achieve greater equity and inclusion in this policy?
 - a. *Public awareness campaign, community mobilization and organizing, cross-organizational collaboration.*
8. What data has been used to assess the policy's impact on equity?
 - a. *The National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2020 report, "Housing Access for People with Criminal Records," notes that one in three Americans has a criminal record, with Black and Latino individuals, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ members disproportionately affected and facing greater barriers to stable housing post-release.*
9. What data needs to be collected to monitor the policy's equity impact? How will it be collected?
 - a. *Number of formerly incarcerated people, disaggregated by demographic data, who enroll in the program, who remain housed for one year, or exit the program early. Intake processes will begin collecting this data and the Permanent Housing Committee will review the data to identify program gaps and successes.*
10. Please describe the framework the policy uses for continuous assessment, community engagement, and iterative improvements.
 - a. *Policy identifies root causes of problems we are solving for; development of improvement plan has been informed by thorough data analysis and lived expertise; commitment made to share and review the policy with all governance groups.*
11. Explain how you have ensured that decision-making processes are transparent and what mechanisms for accountability and community oversight have been employed.
 - a. *The policy is in alignment with Leadership Council values of 'transparency of process' and 'generative conflict'; the residents who are directly impacted by this policy defined the problem for which we are solving; recommendations were co-developed with people most impacted by the policy or program.*

12. How does the policy address systemic barriers and promote success for the populations of focus?

- a. *The policy will allow a greater number of individuals to positively exit the system, thereby serving a greater number of individuals of the focus population. This policy will be used in conjunction with the Coordinated Entry APAT (Austin Prioritization Assessment Tool), which has led to more racial equity in exits.*

13. What alternatives to this policy could achieve similar goals?

- a. *Partner with organizations that offer recovery pathways on a voluntary basis.*

14. What key factors should be taken into account for future changes or revisions to this policy?

- a. *Significant demographic changes in the area of focus.*

15. List any obstacles or restrictions that impacted your work on this policy. *(unscored)*

- a. *Examples of limitations might include: no available housing, unreported or unknown data about specific subpopulations, HUD or other federal requirements, financial constraints, gaps in community partnerships or collaborations, grant deadlines, etc.*
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